

**BOROUGH OF RED BANK**

**COUNTY OF MONMOUTH**

**RESOLUTION NO. 14-21**

**RESOLUTION HONORING T. THOMAS FORTUNE AS  
A DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN OF RED BANK AND DECLARING  
FEBRUARY 2013 AS T. THOMAS FORTUNE MONTH  
IN THE BOROUGH OF RED BANK**

Councilman Zipprich offered the following resolution and moved its adoption:

**WHEREAS**, T. Thomas Fortune was born in 1856 in Jackson County, Florida during the time of slavery, and grew up in Florida during the period of the Civil War and Reconstruction, and

**WHEREAS**, in those difficult circumstances, he obtained his education at various schools for African Americans in Florida and in his youth worked as a page in the Florida State Senate and as an apprenticed printer for Jacksonville newspapers until his family --- his father was a Reconstruction politician --- was threatened by the Ku Klux Klan and forced to leave Florida, and

**WHEREAS**, thereafter T. Thomas Fortune continued his education for a period at Howard University, studying law and journalism, and

**WHEREAS**, in 1881 Fortune relocated to New York City and began a process over the next two decades in which he founded, and became known as editor and part owner of a newspaper first known as the *Globe*, then the *New York Freeman*, and finally the *New York Age*, which became known at the time as "The Afro-American Journal of News and Opinion", and

**WHEREAS**, with Fortune at the helm as principal editor, the *New York Age* became the most widely read of all Black newspapers of the time and stood at the forefront in exposing and decrying against the evils of discrimination, violence, and disenfranchisement of black Americans, with its principal influence arising from Fortune's eloquent editorials which condemned all forms of discrimination and demanded equal justice for all African Americans, and

**WHEREAS**, Fortune in 1890 co-founded the "National Afro-American League", an early civil rights organization to address discrimination against African Americans, which eventually in 1898 was re-organized as the "National Afro-American Council" with Fortune as its President, which organizations thereafter played a vital role in setting the stage and evolving into the Niagara Movement, the NAACP, and other civil rights organizations to follow, and

**WHEREAS**, during that period Fortune also traveled extensively through the South to learn and report on conditions effecting African Americans and wrote and published several influential books, including "Black and White: Land, Labor, and Politics in the South", and he became nationally known and recognized as an orator, civil rights leader, journalist, writer, editor, and publisher, and

**WHEREAS**, in 1901 at the age of 45, Fortune chose to move with his family to the Borough of Red Bank, where he resided in a home, known as Maple Hill, on Bergen Place for many years, and

**WHEREAS**, during those years in the early 1900s Fortune continued his work as the editor of the newspaper published by the African Communities League known as the Negro

World, which was distributed throughout the United States, Canada, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and Central America and was reputed to be the most widely distributed newspaper in the world at the time, and

**WHEREAS**, in his later years Fortune continued to write and speak as a pioneer in the civil rights movement for equal justice, before passing away in 1928 at the age of 71, and

**WHEREAS**, the Empire Style house in which Fortune lived became owned by the Vaccarelli family for many years and, due to the efforts of the African American Bicentennial Committee was placed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 8, 1976 and the New Jersey Register of Historic Places on August 16, 1979, but in recent years has been vacant and has fallen into disrepair, and

**WHEREAS**, the T. Thomas Fortune House is one of only fifty-five National Historic Landmarks, and one of only two Landmarks associated with African-American history, in the State of New Jersey, and the T. Thomas Fortune House is one of only fifty five National Historic Landmarks in New Jersey, and one of only two National Historic Landmarks associated with African-American history in the State of New Jersey, and

**WHEREAS**, due to the passage of time, T. Thomas Fortune and his accomplishments have somewhat faded into history, until recently a Committee of civic minded Red Bank residents has formed dedicated to the preservation and repurposing of the Fortune house in honor of Fortune and Red Bank luminaries Count Basie and Dr. James Parker and to memorialize their accomplishments, and the Red Bank Men's Club, a nonprofit organization founded in 1949 by the renowned humanitarian Dr. James Parker, has taken up the cause of preserving the T. Thomas Fortune House and the Red Bank Men's Club Foundation, a 501(C)3 charitable organization, is serving as fiscal sponsor for the preservation effort, and

**WHEREAS**, to endorse that effort and in recognition of the life and accomplishments of T. Thomas Fortune, a long time and distinguished citizen of Red Bank, and as February is Black History Month, the Borough Governing Body deems it appropriate to declare the month of February 2014 as T. Thomas Fortune Month in the Borough of Red Bank.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and Borough Council of Red Bank that February 2014 is hereby declared as T. Thomas Fortune Month in the Borough of Red Bank, in honor of the man and his contributions and accomplishments as a pioneer in the American Civil Rights pantheon.

Seconded by Councilwoman Burnham and adopted on roll call by the following vote:

|                      | Yes   | No  | Abstain | Absent |
|----------------------|-------|-----|---------|--------|
| Councilman Murphy    | ( x ) | ( ) | ( )     | ( )    |
| Councilwoman Burnham | ( x ) | ( ) | ( )     | ( )    |
| Councilwoman Horgan  | ( x ) | ( ) | ( )     | ( )    |
| Councilwoman Lewis   | ( x ) | ( ) | ( )     | ( )    |
| Councilman Zipprich  | ( x ) | ( ) | ( )     | ( )    |
| Councilman DuPont    | ( x ) | ( ) | ( )     | ( )    |

Dated: January 8, 2014